

LONG ISLAND FORUM



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LETTERS FROM FORUM READERS

FEBRUARY 1954

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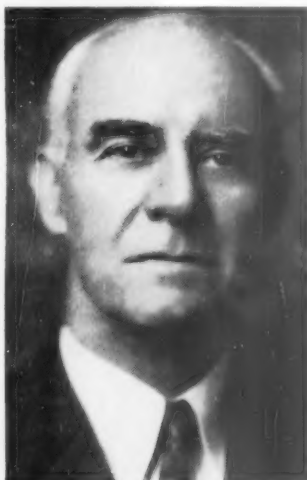
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That Hulbert Flag

In her History of East Hampton
 (p. 112) Mrs. Jeannette Edwards
 Rattray says that the roster of
 Capt. John Hulbert's company of
 Hampton minute men and "their
 homemade battle flag were found
 under the eaves in Dr. John Lyon
 Gardiner's house in Bridgehampton."
 She adds that the flag now
 at the Suffolk County Historical
 Building "is the earliest flag of



Dr. Clarence Ashton Wood

this type to be preserved." She
 does not say it is the "original
 Stars and Stripes", which flag was
 adopted by Congress June 14, 1777
 as a naval flag.

I said in the May Forum, 1951
 (p. 93): "By his purchase of the
 former Bridgehampton residence
 of Capt. Hulbert, Dr. Gardiner
 came into possession of the so-
 called Hulbert flag together with
 some old papers pertaining to the
 military service of Hulbert and the
 Hampton minutemen. These were
 found by Dr. Gardiner in the attic
 of the old Hulbert house and there

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Decline of L. I. Whaling

VARIOUS reasons for the sudden termination of Long Island's whaling industry have been advanced. These include the alleged scarcity of whales, the discovery of mineral oil and the California Gold Rush. Nevertheless, whales were plentiful, as evidenced by a \$995,000 "take" in 1847; likewise, the first oil well (at Titusville, Pennsylvania) was not opened until 1859, nor did the east coast exodus to California occur until 1849, more than a year after the majority of Sag Harbor's whaleship owners decided that they had had enough and would make no further investments in the industry.

Viewed from this angle, Long Island whaling may be said to have committed suicide. Many another industry, many a business concern faced with an equally grave situation in which further capital was essential, has increased its investment, adopted more efficient methods and successfully come through. There are those who reason that had this been done in the case of Long Island whaling, the industry could have continued with profit for another generation at least and possibly much longer.

As it was, when in 1847 a near-million dollar gross return failed to show a substantial net profit because whaling ships had had to sail too far and be away too long in order to fill their holds, the owners, with few exceptions decided to quit the game. Ship after ship was sold into other pursuits. Some became coal barges; some freighters. A number were left idly at anchor, remaining unpainted and neglected until impressed a year or more later into the "rush" to California. Within a very few years the once important Long Island whaling fleet was completely dispersed. So, too, were the men engaged

Paul Bailey

in the devious branches of the industry, such as owners, agents, brokers and hundreds of self-employed who operated kindred business concerns.

As for the whaling skippers and sailors who numbered thousands of Long Islanders, they found themselves left high and dry. Many took up fishing, some went in for farming, but a large number remained unemployed except for odd jobs. To such men the California Gold Rush, coming after months of uncertainty and in many cases idleness, was a siren call indeed. To men who had rounded the Horn and sailed the Seven Seas, the west coast was not far away. Many of them had glimpsed the mountains, bays and beaches of the Far West from the deck of a whaleship. Callow youths who had hoped to take up whaling accepted the westward trek as a substitute.

Local shipowners had no reason to halt the impending exodus. With only two whaleships clearing Sag Harbor in 1849 in quest of whales, many of the others, unrepaired and unpainted, began hauling freight and passengers to San Francisco. Some

took the long voyage around the southern tip of South America or through the Straits of Magellan, just north of the Horn, while others went as far as the Isthmus of Panama, there discharging cargoes and passengers to be carried to the Pacific on the new Isthmus Railroad, and thence up the west coast on a line of packets. The Southampton and California Trading Company was organized on Long Island to utilize former whaleships in the mad scramble to the gold fields. There was a tremendous demand for building materials and many a shipload of Long Island finished lumber was carried to Frisco at \$60 per ton. Thus the local whaling industry, which had died in 1847, was completely buried by loss of ships and men within a few years.

Brindley D. Sleight, Sag Harbor editor, declared that not less than 800 Long Island whalers started for California in 1849. That landmen, including a great many carpenters and other artisans, greatly exceeded that number there is little doubt. Southampton town alone lost more than 250 of its unemployed whalers. So large was the exodus from this and East Hampton town



Sag Harbor's Old Custom House

that Pastor Copp of the Sag Harbor Presbyterian Church held a special service for these departing citizens and their families and preached a farewell sermon which could well be called a funeral address over the remains of a dead industry.

This church, minus its majestic steeple which Sleight stated was in its day the tallest in America, is now known as the Whalers' Church. Its spire was the principal landmark for incoming and outgoing ships. The steeple was blown down in the hurricane of 1938 and though quite intact where it lay, was never replaced. According to Historian Henry Triglar Weeks, most of its time honored material became firewood for local consumers.

The Iowa, Captain William Howes, was the first Long Island ship to leave for the west coast. With a cargo of lumber and a number of optimistic gold-seekers, she cleared Sag Harbor shortly after New Year's Day of 1849, to be followed on Feb. 3 by the Sabina, Captain Henry Green. Besides lumber and provisions for San Francisco markets, she carried 19 east end whaling skippers in a personnel of some 50 men, each one of whom had invested \$500 towards purchase of the vessel and financing the voyage.

There are Long Islanders today who speak with pride of having an ancestor among these argonauts who have been likened unto the Pilgrim Fathers of 1620. The skippers who went along were Henry Rhodes, chief mate; Thomas E. Warren, second mate; Franklin C. Jessup. William P. Huntting, Job Hedges, Alphonse Boardman, George W. Post, Pyrrhus Concer, John Kellas, Daniel Howell, Nathaniel Post, Charles Crook, James E. Glover, Robert E. Gardiner, Stephen B. French, Watson C. Coney, Absolom S. Griffing. John W. Hull and William S. Bellows.

Other Long Island whalemen who joined the argosy and

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Under Three Townships

THE heart of the village of Wading River, as it is known today, enjoys the dubious distinction of having been a part of three townships at different times in its life.

First settled in 1671 by a delegation of "eight families or eight men" from Brookhaven, it followed naturally that the new village was a part of Brookhaven Township. Although a group of Southold people came shortly thereafter and settled themselves in the east portion of the community, still the major part of the village belonged to Brookhaven for some years.

In 1709, it became a part of Southold Town, under circumstances which many find amusing.

The records tell us that one John Rogers, who had been a townsman of Brookhaven, had removed himself to the Town of Southold, and through a chain of unfortunate circumstances, had become a public charge.

Southold claimed, with some justice, that the cost of his support was chargeable to the town whence he had come. Brookhaven seemed to feel differently. After all, the Brookhaven fathers opined, Rogers had left Brookhaven for Southold of his own free will, and they washed their hands of him.

During the year of 1708, much correspondence was undertaken which in those days consumed a long space of time.

The evidence was finally proved against Brookhaven, however, for, at a meeting of the trustees in June, 1709, there was made the following resolution:

"Upon the application of James Reeve, in behalf of the Town of Southold, in reference to defraying the charge of keeping John Rogers, it was agreed upon between the said James Reeve on the one part in the town of Southold, and the

Evelyn Rowley Meier

Trustees of Brookhaven on the other part, that the Town of Brookhaven shall be acquitted and fully discharged from all charges whatever, that now is or shall hereafter be concerning the said John Rogers, his keeping or care, on the condition that the Town of Brookhaven do assign unto the Town of Southold all their patent right of the land and meadow on the East side of the Wading River, and also shall pay unto the said James Reeve, four pounds in current money at his house, for the use of the Town of Southold, at or before the 29th day of September next ensuing the date hereof."

A note continues to state that a consideration of the deal shall be that Southold should "take care of the aforesaid John Rogers and give him his rum".

By virtue of this deal, the Town of Southold acquired a triangular parcel approximately one mile on the West, seven-eighths of a mile on the East, and three-fourths of a mile on the North, a center

line of the Wading River, or the Creek, becoming the boundary line between the Towns of Brookhaven and Southold.

Thus for 83 years.

On March 3, 1792, an act was passed dividing Southold into two Townships, the westerly part becoming the Township of Riverhead, which act accounts for the third township figuring in Wading River's "ownership". It remains a part of Riverhead Town today.

As things turned out, the deal was an unhappy one for Brookhaven financially. Southold, and later Riverhead, acquired for purpose of taxation, about 279.44 acres. A minimum estimate of its assessed valuation at the present time might be \$300,000, divided into over a hundred ownerships. Think what this area may have brought into the tax coffers, through the years!

I remember Gerritsen's tide mill (January Forum) when it was running and doing business. Did you know some of those thrifty Dutchmen used to use the mill pond to fatten oysters in? J. P. DeLong, Jamaica.



Peconic River 50 Years Ago

Decline of Whaling

Continued from page 24

who, notwithstanding their investment, served as needed before the mast were Thomas F. Riley Jr., Thomas J. Glover, John H. Cook, Augustus Ludlow, William W. Parker, David F. Parker, George Herrick, Andrew L. Edwards, James Rogers, John B. Crook, G. U. Hatch, Theodore H. Wood, Horatio Rogers, Charles Seely, George Howell, C. W. Howell, John R. Mills, N. B. Rogers and others.

This memorable voyage around the Horn officially began at New York where additional cargo and passengers were taken on, and as might be supposed the departure of the old whaling vessel with its all-captain crew proved a Roman holiday for journalistic humorists and, in lieu of radio or television, vaudeville comedians. The gallant Sabina, nevertheless, weathered the bombardment of early Victorian jokes with the same indifference that she later rounded the Horn, to eventually drop anchor in San Francisco Bay. There, however, she was practically abandoned as her gold-feverish personnel rushed off in quest of wharves.

Day after day, month after month, year after year she lay, finally settling into the mud as the city grew up around her. In time her timbers, cut from Long Island trees, became a part of the ground about her remains just as so many Long Islanders became a part of the body politic that grew up on the west coast.

The Sabina's fate also befell the local whaleship Niantic. Abandoned in San Francisco Bay in the fall of 1849 by her gold-hungry crew and passengers, she lay near the shore until reclamation operations by the booming city absorbed her Long Island timbers. In the case of this vessel, however, her memory was kept alive by a hostelry being erected over her grave. Named the Niantic Hotel, it stood un-

til recent years as a monument to all those Long Island whaling ships which ended their days along the west coast of America.

The whaling ship Huron, which left Sag Harbor for the Pacific on June 19, 1849, had lain for months on a sand flat near Sag Harbor before being pulled off, patched, painted and sent around Cape Horn with Captain George H. Corwin in command. Barely had she reached San Francisco when Captain Corwin died. Nevertheless, her cargo of Long Island lumber was disposed of at Gold Rush prices and a handsome profit was returned to Oliver R. Wade and his partners in the venture, all residents of eastern Long Island.

The schooner Sierra Nevada, a speedy product of Benjamin Wade's Sag Harbor shipyard, left for California August 28, 1849, taking a number of passengers and a cargo of provisions and lumber. Her master, Captain Lawrence B. Edwards, of an old east end family, landed his passengers safely at San Francisco, sold the cargo, then sold the ship and, electing to remain a Westerner, became the young city's first superintendent of wharves.

The Cadmus (of Lafayette fame) left Sag Harbor Oct. 20, 1849, commanded by Captain John W. Fordham, and reached Frisco Bay only to share the fate of the Sabina and the Niantic. Twenty-five years before, she had carried the Marquis Lafayette from France to New York on his memorable visit to be the guest of honor of the United States in recognition of the French general's services in the Revolution. Captain Fordham left the Cadmus at San Francisco and entered the trans-Pacific trade. He never returned to Long Island but died some years later in China.

On October 23, 1849, the Hamilton weighed anchor at Sag Harbor enroute to Cali-

Continued on Page 32

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A Hurricane at Sea

ON August 1887 the three-masted schooner John R. Bergen, with a cargo of 1000 tons of raw sugar, under the command of Captain William J. Squires, enroute from Cuba to Boston, was struck by a hurricane. One sailor was killed and another suffered a broken leg from the heavy seas. The ship's plight may be judged from the cover photograph of the large oil painting of the vessel made by Antonio Jacobsen of Hoboken, N. J., from an account of the episode supplied him by Captain Squires, who was my father.

A hurricane at sea in sailing ship days was a great deal more serious than it is today, with wireless, modern means of rescue and powerful engines to drive the vessel. In the old days ships could do little for one another in such a condition as each had its own battle to survive.

In the case of the schooner Bergen my father, in order to keep her head to the mighty blasts, used a sea-anchor consisting of a spar with a storm trysail attached to it. Meanwhile the schooner drifted towards the Great Isaac Shoal lighthouse and to avoid the shoal the sea-anchor was shifted from the bow to the stern to keep her stern to the wind and lessen the drift. This shifting of the sea-anchor during the height of the hurricane, performed on a stygian night, was later called "a marvelous piece of seamanship finely executed". It saved the ship and its cargo, valued in all at some \$90,000.

It seems that the wind helped to tow the drag easterly enough for the Bergen to clear the shoal. Later the hauser was again shifted, this time back to the bow, and thus the vessel rode out the hurricane, finally reaching

Harry B. Squires

Nassau in the Bahamas under a juriesail rig.

Mr. Jacobsen also did a large color painting of the schooner Louis V. Place, commanded by my father, which was lost off the south shore of Long Island, about opposite Sayville, in the winter of 1895. The Forum has told the story of that wreck in which my father lost his life.

Another schooner commanded by my father was the Carrie A. Lane, which was also commanded for a time and partly owned by Captain John B. Phillips of Sag Harbor, who likewise commanded and had an interest in the Louis V. Place at one time. Incidentally, Lane was the family name of my father's mother.

The Carrie A. Lane, a four-masted schooner, went ashore about 1½ miles east of Shinnecock Life Saving Station on September 18, 1886. Her master then, a Captain Stratton and his two daughters were rescued by breeches buoy and

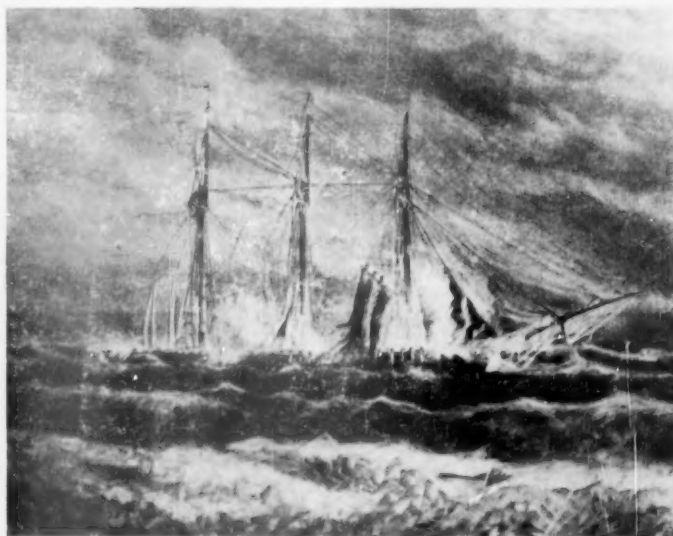
the vessel was later hauled off.

My father, Captain William H. Squires, was a direct descendant of Ellis Squires 1st (1738-1822), who with his wife and nine children sailed from Machias, Maine, to Long Island in the summer of 1773 and settled near Red Creek, north of Hampton Bays. During the Revolution he had his troubles with the British troops part of whose earthworks may still be seen north of Canoe Place Inn.

His brother Allen P. Squires served as postmaster at Good Ground (Hampton Bays) for 49 years and also kept a general store there. Another brother was assistant keeper of the Shinnecock lighthouse of which a cousin served as keeper for 17 years. One brother and four other men named Squires from this vicinity were victims of the sea.

To go back to the schooner John R. Bergen, my father received from her owners a gold medal which I still have, for

Continued on page 37



Schooner Louis V. Place

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We liked Dr. Rapp's account of Setauket's Caroline Church. It's as beautiful as its history is interesting. (Mrs.) Greta Barberry, Newark, N. J.

Having read of Oliver Charlick, one-time LIRR prexy, before, I think Brother (John) Tooker was pretty mild in his account of him. David A. Albertson, Little Neck.

Surely have enjoyed reading the Forum this past year. (Miss) Mary Louise Winters, Houston, Texas (formerly of Westhampton Beach).

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Historic Long Island (Rufus Reckwell Wilson) 1902.

Brooklyn Village (Ralph Foster Weld) Columbia University Press. 1938.

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Tappen Data Wanted

Who was the father of Jeremiah Tappen, late of Sheepshead Bay, born about 1809, died October 14, 1864. Buried in a Quaker Cemetery in Jericho, L. I. Reinterred November 9, 1883 in Greenwood Cemetery, Brooklyn. Also seek names of father's brothers and sisters, if any. George C. Stephen, (Descendant), 87 Dartmouth Road, Manhasset, L. I. (2).

Miss Kate Wheeler Strong continues to tell interesting tales of old Long Island. Hope she'll keep doing it. (Mrs.) Eva Franklin Coy, Kew Gardens.

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He Saw President Washington

AMONG old papers belonging to her mother's family, my cousin Miss Carolyn H. Strong found an account of the life of the illustrious Rev. Peter I. Vanpelt, incidents from which she has kindly allowed me to use in the Forum.

The Rev. Peter was a native Long Islander, born in Bushwick, Kings County, in 1778 while the Revolution was raging. He was the son of John Van Pelt (two words) and Phebe Duryea, of an old Huguenot family which had helped settle that town. The Duryea farm lay on Newtown Creek about opposite the old Alsop place. On his father's side Peter was descended from one of the earliest settlers of New Utrecht while his grandparents on both sides were active in founding the Reformed Church in America.

One day in April 1790, when Peter was twelve years old, President George Washington passed through New Utrecht on his way to call at the Lefferts home. The distinguished visitor and his cortege paused in front of Peter's school where Schoolmaster Muhsenbelt had drawn up the pupils as an honor guard.

That was a momentous day for the future preacher, but something even more wonderful happened to him later on. In the afternoon he had gone to his grandfather's fishing station on the beach and was there when Washington came along to observe the drawing of the seine containing a great haul of shad. As the general watched, Peter stood beside him and you can imagine that he never forgot the incident, nor failed to tell of it frequently throughout his life.

Peter was sent to grammar school and later to Erasmus Hall to study under the eminent Dr. Wilson, principal. Upon the latter's being called

Kate Wheeler Strong

to Columbia College, Peter succeeded him as principal of Erasmus before himself entering Columbia. When, following Washington's death in 1799, Congress called for memorial services on his birthday in 1800 throughout the nation, it was the Rev. Peter Vanpelt who delivered a stirring oration at the historic old Flatbush Church to a gathering of some 7000 mourners. Needless to say, he told the story of his own youthful meeting with the first President a decade before.

During the War of 1812, while serving as pastor on Staten Island, the Rev. Peter Vanpelt was appointed by the Governor as chaplain of the troops there while President Madison broadened his sphere to include the entire New York area. Besides being pastor of several Staten Island churches, Peter served for a time as commissioner of schools there. He founded at least one Sunday School and was very active in the temperance movement. This native

Long Islander spent his final years in retirement in New York City.

Schodack's Location

Felix Reifschneider's article in October Forum interested me very much "Who Remembers Schodack."

We moved to Rockville Centre about 1910 or 1911, and I recall that some of the residents of Schodack were inclined to lose their temper at hearing that name mentioned, and I think that it was eventually changed to either Tanglewood or Lake View; I do not remember which. Now for the location; it was north of the two Brooklyn Water Works ponds, one of which was Smiths Pond on Merrick Road, east of Ocean Ave., and Woodfield Road I think was their main street.

I imagine that it would be almost impossible to identify it today with the Parkways which have been built, and the general building up of the community.

Wilson A. Higgins
Hillsdale, N. Y.

Note: Now who can tell the origin of the name Schodack? Edi.

Was thrilled to read Dr. Wood's revelation that Major Andre, who is usually associated with Raynham Hall in Oyster Bay, also stopped at East Hampton. It was an A-1 story. George St. Dennis, Brookhaven.



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Letters From Our Readers

Continued from page 22

they remained for more than four decades."

In the next issue of the Forum (June, p. 113) Mr. Frank Knox Morton Pennypacker, official historian of East Hampton and also of Suffolk County said that statement was "entirely false."

I had also said in the May Forum that: "About eight years before his death, March 30, 1898, Dr. Gardiner transferred the flag and the Hulbert military papers to the attic of his Tower Hill house." That, said Mr. Pennypacker, was a "fabrication." He was "of the opinion that the only time it was in Bridgehampton before William D. Halsey purchased it was when William Gardiner took it with him to the Dr. Gardiner house."

The East Hampton historian concluded by saying if what I had said in the previous issue of the Forum were correct and if he "could believe there was any truth" in my statement that the flag had remained attic-bound in Bridgehampton since the Revolution, then he "would condemn displaying such material in any Historical Institution, least of all in our County."

In the July 1951 Forum in which my article entitled Hulbert Flag Not the First was published, Miss Gertrude T. Leverich, niece of William D. Halsey who gave the flag in question to the Suffolk County Historical Society, said (p. 136) "I know the old Hulbert flag came from the house in Bridgehampton in which Capt. John Hulbert once lived. This house was the home of Dr. John Lion Gardiner while for many years he practiced medicine here. The flag was found by Dr.

Continued on next page

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Letters From Our Readers

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Gardiner in the attic of that house where a lot of papers belonging to Hulbert had been stored and probably forgotten for years. When Dr. Gardiner moved to the house above where we lived he brought the flag there with him. I am sure Uncle Will got the flag from Dr. Gardiner's house on the hill above us. Uncle Will found it in Dr. Gardiner's tower hill house after the death of Mrs. Gardiner. Mr. Pennypacker was not with us when Uncle Will found the flag. He never really forgave Uncle Will for getting the flag ahead of him."

Mr. Ernest S. Clowes of Bridgehampton and a councilor of the Suffolk County Historical Society wrote Dr. Alexander C. Flick in 1927, then State Historian: "The flag hung for many years without attracting any attention from a beam along a stairway leading to an observation tower in the (Dr. John Lion) Gardiner home. * * * After the house was abandoned it still hung there and eventually was rolled up and thrust into a corner. * * * William D. Halsey of this place bought the flag with other antique stuff sold when the home of Mrs. Gardiner, a near neighbor of his was broken up. * * * Mr. Halsey told me he knew nothing about the flag having been found with a parcel of Hulbert papers. * * * He told me that he considered the theory of its having been the original Stars and Stripes as merely an interesting theory."

Mr. Pennypacker also said: "I can swear however (but he did not) that the documents came from between the walls of the Hulbert House in Sag Harbor. I can also swear (but he did not) that unless William Gardiner was misleading me he showed me the flag in Sag Harbor before Halsey saw it at Bridgehampton." (Forum June 1951, p. 113).

Dr. Clarence Ashton Wood
Contributing Editor.

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Decline of Whaling

Continued From Page 26

fornia which she reached four months later. Here her master, Captain Shamgar H. Slate gave up his command and joined the China trade, leaving the Hamilton in San Francisco Bay. He too died in China some years later. In the Hamilton's crew was one Edwin Bill who later wrote of his experiences on the voyage west which included a stop at Juan Fernandez Island where he visited the cave made famous in the then recently published story of Robinson Crusoe.

The exodus of Long Island vessels and Long Island whalers from east to far west continued all through the Gold Rush years of 1849 and '50 and as new victims of the "gold fever" acquired outworn whaling ships for several years thereafter they too joined the movement.

Commanded by Captain Nicoll Richard Dering, the Ann Mary Ann cleared Sag Harbor October 27 in the year 1849. At San Francisco Captain "Dick" as he was called, youngest son of Henry P. Dering, who had served as Collector of the Port of Sag Harbor during the administration of President Washington, disposed of ship and cargo and elected to become a Californian. There he remained, prospering in various fields of business until his death at Magdalena Bay in 1873. He was one of a number of Long Islanders who settled permanently on the west coast and there gave root to family dynasties that today, bearing old Long Island names, are playing an important part in the affairs of California, its towns and cities.

Most of Long Island's Forty-niners, however, returned east and with few exceptions had

little to show beyond experience for their pilgrimage. Among the exceptions was one Thomas Mulford who, having returned to his boyhood home, Patchogue, thereafter lived in ease from moderate wealth acquired in the western gold diggings. Another Mulford, Charles W., of Hempstead, is also said to have amassed a fortune as a Forty-Niner.

During the year 1850 other Long Island whaleships joined the westward procession. On May 1st sailed the schooner Robert Bruce, built at Huntington's shipyard in Sag Harbor and commanded by Captain Richard J. Nichols. Twelve days later the little 48-ton schooner San Diego, a product of Benjamin Wade's east end yard, began its long voyage west. Her master, Captain Jared Wade, however, finding the passage around the Horn too severe for the tiny

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vessel took her through the Straits of Magellan.

According to the journal of Charles Waite who passed through these straits at about the same time on the brig B. M. Prescott, many a vessel chose this inside route to that of rounding Cape Horn with its "thousands of bergs and the mightiest fields of ice on earth, outside the frozen polar seas." The San Diego's voyage from Long Island to the Golden Gate which consumed seven months, was, declared Harry D. Sleight, the longest ever made by an American ship of its size up to that time. But small as she was, the schooner San Diego survived the frenzied Gold Rush days and after nearly three decades of trading in Pacific waters was eventually lost in a storm in Sitka Bay, Alaska, in 1878.

Still another ship to clear Long Island for the west coast during 1850 was the Acasta which had seen long and hard service in whaling. Commanded by Captain J. C. Stratton, she weighed anchor here September 14th with a cargo of general freight and a number of passengers, and neither the ship nor her master ever returned east.

Two years later the schooner Storm, built at Sag Harbor, sailed for California and two years after that the Amelia and the Draco carried passengers and freight bound for San Francisco. The latter, however, altered her plans enroute. Off the coast of Brazil she came upon the brig Parana, abandoned but still seaworthy, and took her in tow, returning to Sag Harbor with her salvage prize. Here, repaired and refitted, the Parana was renamed the Highland Mary and as such sailed the whaling lanes for two decades, bringing satisfactory dividends to her Long Island owners.

Besides the scores of Long Island whaling vessels which sailed during Gold Rush days to the west coast, there in many cases to end their days



Whalers' Beacon on Little Gull Island

of usefulness, a number were sold as they lay in the island's harbors, or on the bottoms thereof, to outside interests. Among these were the Niantic, already mentioned, which was purchased in New York and sailed west from that port; the Thomas Dickason, the Henry Lee and the Hungarian. There were likewise the Oscar, the Thames, the Romulus and the Citizen, all of them purchased during the 1850's by New England and other parties for service in the coastwise trade.

The Daniel Webster, the Henry, the Neptune and the Fanny, which had brought their Long Island owners dividends far beyond the original investment, were sold for a

song, to be patched up and sent west bearing heavy cargoes and numerous paying passengers who preferred traveling by sea in a leaky ship to trekking cross-country through Indian lands and over parched deserts.

One Long Island whaling ship, the old and unseaworthy Panama, was sold to New York parties who loaded her with many tons of precious coal and sent her forth with a makeshift crew of would-be gold diggers, enroute to San Francisco by way of Cape Horn. One newspaper commented that the reckless souls aboard the "derelict" were pretty sure to make the Golden Gate, one way or another. The

Continued on page 35

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a baby shirt made of dish towels. To test the simplicity of the sewing required, every student at Traphagen made up the design he or she entered in the contest, not majors with little or no sewing experience as well as those taking courses in clothing construction. The prize winners included students from day, evening and Saturday classes.

The contest sponsorship worked

like a two-way street. The soap manufacturer found the fresh, intriguing how-to-do ideas they wanted for housewives who use their detergent, Breeze, since each package contains either a dish towel or terry wash cloth by Cannon Mills. This school's basic policy is "Traphagen School of Fashion, Cooperating with the Trade"; such competitions give its students, from novices to most advanced, an opportunity to work with important manufacturers in a variety of ways, and prizes are awarded the winners.

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Decline of Whaling

Continued from page 33

vessel, however, never reached California. Stopping for supplies at a South American port, she was promptly condemned by the port authorities. What became of her cargo or of her crew and passengers is not known to this writer.

Meanwhile these were sad days for Long Island, especially at the east end. Few families but had been sorely affected by the tremendous exodus of former whaling ships and former whalers to the west coast and other sections of the country. Sag Harbor, having rebulkheaded her waterfront and erected new warehouses and other buildings since the conflagration of 1845, was described as "seeming to be crated up for storage." The old ship canal leading to Conklin's Point lay almost unused. On the Point where ships once discharged casks of oil and took on staves and barrelheads for future cargoes and where Uriah Gordon's shipyard had been a scene of bustle and hustle, thatch-grass began to grow over the launching rails, enclosing the shops in a veritable jungle.

When in 1850 the Aqueduct Company which supplied ships with water at the Long Wharf closed down, the clang of its big brass bell sounding morning, noon and night over the years became only a memory. Its final stroke was a death-knell to Long Island whaling.

Although as an industry Long Island whaling really ended in 1850, like a wounded whale it continued to struggle for some time thereafter. In 1854, the Ontario, owned by W. R. Post, returned home from a four-year voyage to the Arctic with a small cargo of oil and word that her master, Captain George B. Brown had been killed while "cutting-in" on a sperm. Mates L. B. Leek and Jonathan Edwards of Amagansett had brought the vessel back.



Montauk Light From Watercolor
by Cyril A. Lewis

As late as Civil War days, because of a tremendous advance in the price of oil, eleven old and rather dilapidated members of the once mighty Long Island fleet voyaged forth in quest of leviathans. They were the Pacific, the Odd Fellow, Union, Ocean, Concordia, Baelina, J. A. Robb, Susan, Excel, Highland Mary, and the Myra. The Mary Gardiner, arriving home in 1861 with a \$40,000 cargo, had outdistanced a Confederate privateer so neatly that her skipper, Captain Andrew Jennings, gave up whaling then and there and turned the vessel into a blockade runner in which field her speed was put to more profitable use.

Of the island's veteran

whaleships still afloat at the outbreak of the Rebellion, three of them—the Emerald, the Timor and the Noble—were sold to Uncle Sam, loaded with rocks, fitted with automatic valves and ignominiously sunk off Charleston harbor in an attempt to tighten the Northern blockade of that rebel port. For many years after the war their submerged hulls provided excellent seabass fishing for Charleston's saltwater anglers.

In 1871 five former Long Island whaleships, the Fanny, John Wells, Minerva, Thomas Dickason and Concordia, which had been disposed of to New Englanders, were lost in an Arctic ice-jam which destroyed in all some thirty-four American vessels, valued at \$1,637,000—a crushing blow to what remained of the country's whaling interests. One Long Island master, Captain Eugene Ludlow of Bridgehampton, was with this fleet at the time and with other survivors was rescued after a long journey over the ice-fields.

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men visiting the scene of the catastrophe found the charred remains of the Concordia which it was learned had been burned by natives of the remote region for her metal. Not far away from the Concordia's remains lay the Thomas Dickason resting on her beam ends, bilged and beyond salvaging. A similar fate befell a smaller fleet of American whaling vessels off Point Barrow, Alaska, in 1876 with the loss of some lives.

The Highland Mary came within a few years of being Long Island's last whaleship. As previously told, this gallant brig had been found adrift and abandoned in the South Atlantic in 1850 by the Long Island whaler Draco. Reconditioned, she continued whaling out of Sag Harbor for more than two decades, carrying on the traditions of the departed industry until all but one of the island-built whaleships had passed on or into other lines. She was finally, in 1871, forced to take refuge from a storm by putting into Tobiago Island, Central America. There, unable to again put to sea owing to damaged planking and opened seams, she was condemned and destroyed.

Long Island's last whaleship was the brig Myra. This sturdy vessel had whaled throughout the Rebellion, clearing local waters on one voyage just as hostilities began. In 1863, commanded by Captain Jacob Havens, she slipped from Rio De Janeiro harbor barely in time to elude the Confederate Cruiser Alabama. Five years later, still engaged in whaling and com-

manded by Captain Henry Babcock, she was pursued and halted by a United States cruiser on the watch for slave-runners.

The brig Myra, one of the slowest of all the local whaling ships of her day, was outstanding for seaworthiness and strength of construction. Her final voyage began on July 17, 1871, more than two decades after the island's whaling industry had been accepted as a thing of the past. Commanded by Captain Henry Babcock, she cleared Sag Harbor with three Long Island mates, James M. Herrick and James Laury of Southampton and David E. Brown of Sag Harbor. The only other Islander aboard her was the cooper, also a Sag Harborite, Edward Smith. The members of the crew, including the boatsteerers (harpooners) were from other parts, most of them bearing names which bespoke the Scandinavian.

The Myra, fully equipped, sailed in 1871 because the supply of whale-oil failed to meet public demands and as a result the price of the product had reached unprecedented heights as also had that of whalebone, then being used for such things as better horsewhips and ladies' corsets. The old brig on this last voyage confined her labors to the South Atlantic as it was deemed unsafe for her ancient hull to attempt to round Cape Horn, Felix Reisenberg's "cold-looking nob rising from the sea."

Whaling during the better part of four years off the eastern coast of Central and South

Continued on next page

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Monumental Work

Decline of Whaling

Continued from page 36

America, crossing and recrossing the South Atlantic time and again, pausing when need be at southern ports and little known islands for fresh water and other supplies and to drop and receive mail at certain designated points, the brig Myra collected oil and bone whose total value approximated \$32,000, a small sum indeed for nearly four years' efforts. This gross sum was cut down considerably by having to ship the products north on other vessels.

Financially, the Myra's venture was a complete failure. Her owners received less than the cost of fitting her for the voyage while the officers and crew eventually returned to Long Island practically unreimbursed for their more than three years' service as well as for their own personal outlay in clothing and other necessities. But these men did not return home aboard the brig Myra. They came as passengers on other vessels, and they did not reach Long Island until the summer of 1875.

They had been forced to abandon the old whaleship at the Barbadoes where she had taken refuge in the teeth of a howling gale in the winter of 1874. There she had been hauled out and officers and crew had attempted to patch her spreading seams sufficiently for the long voyage home. On December 14, 1874, however, examined by the authorities, she was officially condemned. What little equity came from the old ship when she was disposed of as junk

is not known. Burned for her metal, she became a funeral pyre for the once important Long Island whaling industry.

Hurricane at Sea

Continued from Page 27

saving the vessel and cargo. On Washington's Birthday, 1895, 14 days after he had lost his life in the wreck of the Louis V. Place, his body was found washed ashore not far from his birthplace at Hampton Bays and he was buried there in the family plot. The medal was found in one of his pockets, a fitting memorial to the Captain and his five seamen who perished with him on the schooner Place.

My father certainly had an adventurous life as he went to sea at the age of sixteen and steadily climbed to the position of ship's master. Al-

though his death was a tragic one, it was a fitting climax to a career on sailing vessels that had lasted about three decades.

Re. the Louis V. Place

In reference to the wreck of the Schooner Louis V. Place off the outer beach about opposite Sayville in February 1895, I knew two of the surfmen who took part in the rescue efforts. Fred Saunders, the surfman who discovered the wreck worked on the Nicoll farm in East Islip with my father in 1888 at the time of the blizzard, and he died in Mineola in his 94th year in 1943. Two of his daughters are still living, one in Islip; the other in Queens Village.

The other surfman who was at the Point O' Woods station at the time was my stepmother's brother Robert Albin, for many years a night watchman on the George C. Taylor place, now part of Heckscher State Park. Some man named Meier wrote a book on several wrecks and he mentioned Saunders in it. I wonder if Evelyn Rowley Meier, who writes such interest-

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ing stories of Wading River for the Forum, is a connection of his.

I was quite surprised and pleased to note the citation of my story "Hello Girls of Long Ago" in the quarterly of the New York State Historical Association. It speaks well for the Forum and its many writers whose stories are so often cited by that authority.

John Tooker,
Baylon

He Knows Pepperidge

The story "Island's Own Holly," so interestingly presented in your December issue by Julian Denton Smith, is greatly appreciated. Especially so, since as an old-time Long Islander, I long knew of, admired its autumn coloring and recognized the pepperidge with its advantages and disadvantages as a usable wood. Glad to learn, through your outstanding publication, the scientific name and the many other appellations for the pepperidge tree. Yet, I have heard it given still other and unprintable nick-names by those whose job it was to split some of it.

Which seems to confirm all that has been said with reference to the tenacious structure of this wood and suggests a bit of humor in that connection.

While hard at his task of sawing and splitting some pepperidge timber, the farmhand had to take shelter as best he could during a sudden thunder squall. A blinding flash accompanied by an instantaneous crash called the sawer's attention to a nearby large locust which

had been struck and well shattered. Being a pious man, he doffed his cap, bowed his head and uttered a short prayer as follows, "Please, Dear Lord, try this old pepperidge."

Yours anxiously awaiting each issue of the Forum.

C. Kohler
Glen Cove

The Soap Fat Man

The December Forum came in yesterday and I have read all the letters and the articles as I have been doing for about 15 years and always find something new and interesting or some name that brings back memories of other times.

I liked especially "The Gold Piece Tree" and its sentiment of family thoughtfulness and cohesiveness. The verse therein reminded me of a somewhat similar one which I, as a kid 8 or 7 years old in Washington, D.C., used to recite. That version was as follows:

Sam, Sam, the soap fat man
Washed his face in a frying pan,
Combed his hair with a wagon wheel
And died from a toothache in his heel.

It would be interesting to hear of other versions in other localities. The soap fat man was a character in the economies of the 1880s. He went from door to door gathering beef, mutton and other fats saved by the housewives and gave

in exchange large bars of coarse yellow soap used in the rougher kinds of scrubbing.

You are doing a splendid work and giving quiet enjoyment to a host of people.

John S. Sumner,
Indian River Drive,
Fort Pierce, Fla.

Schooner Olive Leaf

I was especially interested in your picture of the schooner Olive Leaf which my family owned. As I recall hearing my father speak of it, the Olive Leaf was wrecked in Port Jefferson harbor during a terrific gale.

Mrs. J. C. White,
Sagaponack, L. I.

I agree with Ezra Hallock Young of Orient that the old figurehead of Hercules should never have been carted off to Stony Brook. At the same time I always thought that Canoe Place had no right to it either. It should stand on Conklin's Point in Southold town where the frigate Ohio, which carried it so many years, was finally blown up and burned. Horace H. Eversley, City Island.

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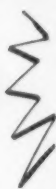
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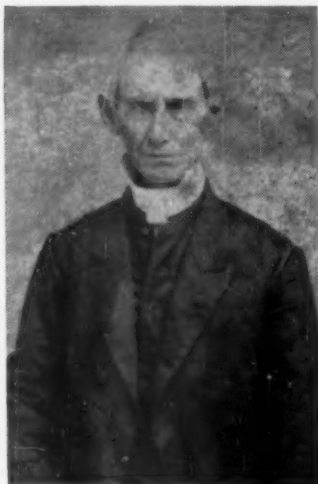
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Parson Hunt

Congregational Church, the Rev.
Theodore Hunt (1849 to 1858)?
I've seen his picture somewhere.
Jerome Reese, Islip.

Elizabeth Chase Hawkins' ac-
count of the Brookhaven lady with
the world's longest hair was most
interesting. (Miss) Bella K. Stone,
Hempstead.

Mrs. Meier is surely telling us
some very thrilling things about
historical Wading River. Don't let
her stop. Grace Terrell Ames, East
Meadow, L. I.

I tried to come back at Brother
McCarthy with an older L. I. busi-
ness concern than he told of. But
I find nothing before that Glen
Cove mortuary business of 1816.
Daniel F. Apgar, Queens.

You can tell Julian Denton Smith
that beachcombing may be an art,
as he wrote in the January num-
ber, but it is also a complete waste
of time. I've hunted the sands of
Jones Beach for many summers
and the only thing of note I ever
found was a set of false teeth
that wouldn't fit. Harry Davis
Apgar, East Meadow.

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